

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 8939

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SREF, TH, LA

SUBJ: LPDR/RTG DISCUSSION OF REPATRIATION OF REFUGEES FROM LAOS

1. DURING DISCUSSION TODAY WITH DCM, NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL SECRETARY GENERAL AIR MARSHAL SITTI INDICATED THAT THAI NEGOTIATORS EXPECT TO REACH AGREEMENT WITH LAO SIDE ON SOME LANGUAGE WITH REGARD TO REPATRIATION OF LAO REFUGEES.

2. DCM EXPRESSED OUR CONCERN OVER ANYTHING WHICH COULD LEAD TO FORCIBLE REPATRIATION OF THE LAND REFUGEES FROM LAOS. SITTI SAID THAT RTG HAD NO INTENTION OF ENTERING INTO ANY AGREEMENT INVOLVING FORCED RETURN OF REFUGEES TO LAOS. HE SAID THAT INSTRUCTIONS ON THAT SCORE WERE QUITE CLEAR AND THAT DISCUSSIONS WITH LAO HAD DEALT ONLY WITH QUESTION OF VOLUNTARY REPATRIATION, WITH UNHCR INVOLVEMENT AND WITH NEED FOR LPDR GUARANTEE OF SAFETY OF ANYONE WHO CHOSE REPATRIATION.

3. DCM NOTED THAT EVEN AS DESCRIBED BY SITTI, AGREEMENT WITH LPDR ON REPATRIATION MIGHT WELL GIVE IMPRESSION THAT RTG WERE MOVING TOWARDS HARSHER POLICY AND THAT, THE DOOR OPENING FOR FORCED REPATRIATION. SITTI SAID THIS WAS NOT SO BUT HE WOULD BE SURE THAT RTG SENIOR

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LEVELS WERE AWARE OF SENSITIVITY THIS ISSUE AND OUR CONCERNS.

4. COMMENT: IF LAO ARE WILLING TO GIVE GUARANTEE OF SAFETY AND ACCEPT UNHCR ROLE BELIEVE THAI WILL MOVE TO SOME AGREEMENT ON VOLUNTARY REPATRIATION. MFA HAS HAD THIS IN MIND FOR SOME TIME. WHAT THIS WOULD MEAN IN PRACTICAL TERMS IS NOT CLEAR. GIVEN REFUGEE ATTITUDES

WE WOULD EXPECT NO SIGNIFICANT INTEREST. HOWEVER, WE
HAVE PUT RTG SENIOR LEVELS ON NOTICE AS TO OUR CONCERN
ABOUT ANY ACTIONS WHICH MIGHT PRELUDE TO FORCED
REPATRIATION.
WHITEHOUSE

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